

is not seeking, at this particular time, a decision on his point of order but, rather, is pointing out generally that there may be a problem existing and he is putting on record the fact that a complaint does exist. I would tell him that his point is well noted. If there are no other hon. members who wish to contribute to the point of order, perhaps the hon. member for Hamilton West should have the floor on motion No. 1.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, since Your Honour said that motions Nos. 1 and 2 would be grouped together for debate, should not both motions be placed before the House at this time?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has the point well taken, of course. His motion No. 2 seeks to delete a portion of the clause that is sought to be deleted in its entirety by motion No. 1. Therefore, motions 1 and 2 should be before the House at the present time. The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) should presumably have the floor first, followed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

The hon. member for Hamilton West moves:

Motion No. 1.

That Bill C-69, an act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, be amended by deleting clause 1.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre moves:

Motion No. 2.

That Bill C-69, an act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, be amended in clause 1 by deleting subclause (2) at page 1 and by renumbering subclause (3) as subclause (2).

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, it is surely not our intention on this side of the House to filibuster this bill, but as a result of concern expressed by members on both sides of the House—though I do not speak particularly for those members sitting across from me—there is some question about the purport of clause 1. First of all, I believe that clause 1 is not only discriminatory but is taking a certain direction that we find difficult to follow at the present time. Clause 1(1)(e) provides that sponsors of programs like LIP, LEAP or programs of the federal government to create employment are entitled to unemployment insurance, notwithstanding that these sponsors are employers. Although the act states that self-employed persons are not within the jurisdiction of the legislation, an exception is being made of sponsors who may be employers.

Programs like LIP and LEAP are essentially short-term programs which have been brought in to help alleviate high unemployment in Canada. We on this side of the House have continually indicated to the minister and the government that we are not impressed with this sort of move, particularly when it is related to an eligibility period of eight weeks within the work force. A period of eight weeks in the work force is sufficient to qualify for unemployment insurance. Indeed, the minister has himself indicated that he is taking a look at the whole benefit structure. What this means to me is that the minister is looking into the eight-week eligibility period and perhaps even into the amount of benefit payable thereunder, whether it is too high or too low. Indeed, the eight-week period may be a disincentive to work. Bearing in mind the latest government statements concerning the possible

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dropping of LIP, LEAP and the Company of Young Canadians, we are wondering whether the right hand in fact knows what the left hand is doing.

● (1520)

My objection to this particular subclause is that it is discriminatory in that it indicates that a certain percentage of individuals within the work force shall be treated as self-employed and brought within the confines of the act. Of course, generally speaking the act disallows this. I will rest my case on that.

We on this side of the House have expressed our concern in no uncertain terms about the second paragraph in clause 1 in which we find there is a substitution by the words "employment of a person who is 65 years of age or over". Those are the words that are being substituted for something else. This appears to be the first step of this government in its fight against high unemployment insurance costs and it is put on the backs of our senior citizens. We resent this very much, because it seems to us that when this bill was first brought in there was every reason and every need for including our senior citizens in the work force. Senior citizens should be involved in the work force because of what they can contribute. In this way they could contribute to unemployment insurance up to the time they reach age 70, or until they opt out by applying for the Canada or Quebec Pension Plan.

It seems to me this government is trying to bring about the forced removal of our senior citizens from the work force. These are people who have made an excellent contribution to the work force of this country, without whose contributions we could not get along at this time. Notwithstanding what has been said on several occasions about appreciation for the work ethic not being what it used to be, if anyone appreciates the work ethic I suggest it is our senior citizens. The minister has said that the government is not trying to take them out of the work force; they can work if they want. He then limits them by saying that if they do stay in the work force, they will not be allowed to make a contribution to the unemployment insurance scheme or receive any benefits. It is this that we find unjust, harsh and callous. It shows complete disregard for the plight of those who are in the twilight of their years but find, for a number of reasons, they want to maintain an effective role in the work force. Many of these people find they must keep working because of the high cost of living coupled with double-digit inflation. It is only right that they should be given the opportunity to work when there are so many people in this country who do not want to work.

We on this side of the House register our concern in the strongest possible voice about this part of the legislation, because it is discriminatory. In effect, the legislation provides that the government appreciates involvement in the work force of those over 65, but it does not need them now because payments under old age security and the old age supplement have gone up.

I would ask the minister what this has to do with the fact that certain individuals want to belong to the work force and continue to make contributions to and get benefits from the unemployment insurance scheme, but through no fault of their own they find themselves unable